OKLAHOMA **CROP WEATHER SUMMARY**

2000 CROP WEATHER REVIEW
Bryan Durham

January: Mostly mild, dry weather caused a further reduction in soil moisture supplies, particularly in the western and southern parts of Oklahoma. Heavy snowfall from 2 to 17 inches covered much of the State during the last week of January, however conditions remained dry overall. This snowfall did provide some much needed moisture to drought-stressed wheat fields in the northern and eastern counties. Producers increased hay feeding to livestock due to lack of adequate forage supplies.

February: Mild temperatures and late-month rainfall boosted growth of wheat and pastures. Wheat conditions improved slightly from the previous month in every district except for the Panhandle. This was one of the warmest February's on record and averaged 6.5 degrees above normal. Areas of western and southern Oklahoma were still mostly short in soil moisture supplies. Warm weather allowed lice to become more active on livestock.

March: Wet weather and warmer than normal temperatures continued to improve wheat and pasture conditions. The excellent growing weather advanced wheat development and some wheat had started to head by the end of the month, particularly in the central and southern districts. Crop and livestock insect problems were minimal throughout most of March.

April: Mostly adequate soil moisture and cooler than normal temperatures promoted development of wheat heads, while almost the entire crop had jointed by the end of April. The first cutting of alfalfa and other hay began and was running ahead of the normal pace. Producers were busy planting and preparing seedbeds for the major row crops. Mild conditions allowed livestock to remain in mostly good condition.

May: Northeast Oklahoma received large quantities of precipitation, with flooding occurring in some counties in this area. The remainder of the State suffered from lack of rain and scorching heat, which were unusual for so early in the year. Warm conditions accelerated plant emergence for soybeans, sorghum, peanuts, and cotton to well ahead of normal. High winds limited the spraying of pastures across the State.

June: One of the wettest June's on record, the statewide-average total precipitation of 7.2 inches was 3.3 inches above normal. This heavy rainfall kept soil moisture at mostly adequate to surplus levels. Temperatures were held down from the abundant cloudiness and rains. Despite the wet conditions, wheat harvest finished the month ahead of normal. The high moisture levels aided germination of the newly planted row crops. Grasshoppers plagued the central and southern districts.

July: Temperatures and precipitation were normal for the month. Farming activities, slowed from the excessive rains during the previous month, greatly picked up steam during July. Producers made excellent progress cutting hay and were also busy the latter part of the month plowing wheat ground and preparing acreage for fall planting. Nearly the entire watermelon crop had set fruit by the end of the month and harvest was progressing ahead of average.

August: Hot temperatures endured and rainfall was extremely scarce. Statewide-average precipitation of .16 inch during August was the least recorded for a warm-season month in Oklahoma in 109 years of record keeping. The hot, dry weather hampered dryland row crop development and pasture conditions faltered statewide. Grasshopper and armyworm attacks remained active during the month.

September: The prolonged scorching temperatures and lack of rainfall further depleted soil moisture supplies. The drought restricted growth and development of many dryland crops, especially in southern Oklahoma. Wheat planting was slowed or halted due to extremely dry fields. As a result of deteriorated pastures and inadequate stock water levels, many livestock herds were showing signs of stress. Large grass and wildfires outbreaks were also a problem during the month.

October: A series of widespread, heavy rains during the last half of October effectively ended the long summer drought. The heavy rains, evident everywhere except in the southeast, replaced the drought with floods. Soils in many areas were too wet to allow planting of winter wheat or harvest of summer crops. Most areas experienced a light to moderate freeze on Sunday, October 10, which hampered future growth of many row crops.

November: Weather during the month was cooler and wetter than normal. Continued wet ground conditions slowed progress of fall small grains planting and row crop harvest. The cool temperatures and wet conditions limited wheat development and the regrowth of native pastures that were diminished during the summer drought. Long standing soggy field conditions slowed or halted peanut and cotton harvest and yield and grade reductions and abandonment were a problem for many producers. Livestock were in good to fair condition statewide.

December: The century ended with a succession of winter storms that spread unusual amounts of ice and snow across Oklahoma and resulted in the State's coldest month since 1983. A Christmas snow and ice storm paralyzed much of the State with loss of electricity and slick roads. Twenty-two deaths between Christmas and New Year's Day were attributed to the weather. The freezing temperatures halted wheat growth and the crop condition worsened throughout the month. Wheat pasture available for grazing was limited and producers fed large quantities of hay and protein to livestock.